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AUTHOR Pounder, Diana G.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the University of Utah's recently revised Ed.D. program and reports the results of several program-evaluation efforts conducted since its implementation. In particular, the most recent evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the field-based doctoral program in educational administration in linking theory and research to the improvement of practice. That study evaluated the degree and ways in which doctoral student field-based projects and studies have resulted in program or policy changes in schools and other education-related agencies. Data indicate that approximately one-half to two-thirds of student projects resulted in some sort of policy or program change in educational practice. The program pairs traditional academic seminars with a series of corresponding field-applications courses. Students are required to complete projects that apply research to problems of practice. Practicing administrators work as part-time clinical faculty to team-teach the field-applications courses with resident faculty. The program has been praised for its use of a departmentwide conceptual orientation, the inclusion of a values and ethics dimension, systematic evaluation, the use of local practitioners, and commitment to high-quality teaching. However, all major actors in the program have outside responsibilities that necessarily take precedence over those of the program. (LMI)

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THEORY TO PRACTICE:

A Description and Multi-Dimensional Evaluation of the University of Utah's Educational Administration Ed.D. Program

Diana G. Pounder

Associate Professor

Department of Educational Administration

339 Milton Bennion Hall

University of Utah

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

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Introduction

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In 1991, the University of Utah's Department of Educational Administration implemented a field-based doctoral program for the advanced preparation of practicing administrators. The program was designed to more effectively link the theory and research emphasis found in the university with the improvement of practice in schools or other education-related agencies (See Ogawa & Pounder, 1993; Pounder, 1993). The program pairs traditional doctoral academic seminars that have a theory/research emphasis with a series of corresponding "Field Applications" courses. These field applications courses require students to complete projects applying their theory/research study to problems of practice. Also, students' culminating dissertation work or "clinical research study" is designed with a similar emphasis. To aid in establishing this theory-practice linkage, practicing administrators from the field work as part-time clinical faculty to team-teach the field applications courses with resident faculty. Also, students' employing agencies are encouraged to cooperate with students to identify projects that would have relevance to current problems in their own educational organization or within the state. The department's intention is that these field applications projects would not only provide a valuable learning experience for students, but that their employing organizations might benefit from specific studies informing their own problems of educational practice.

based program have been evaluated, including its structure, staffing, and instructional and student evaluation processes (see, for example, Hart & Naylor, 1992; Newell & Sperry, 1992; Ogawa & Galvin, 1992; Pounder, 1994). Some minor alterations in the original program structure and staffing arrangement were made after the first two years of implementation. Specifically, the program was changed from a three-year to a four-year schedule, with theory and corresponding field application courses offered in sequence rather than concurrently. Also, clinical faculty assignments were changed to simplify teaching and advisement coordination efforts. The final program structure and staffing arrangements went into effect during the 1993-94 academic year.

Below are reported the context for the preparation program revision, a description of the Ed.D. program, and a summary report of several evaluation efforts conducted since the program's implementation. The most recent evaluation study assesses the effectiveness of the program's theory-practice linkages by evaluating the degree and ways in which Ed.D. student field-based projects and clinical research studies have resulted in program or policy changes in educational practice.

Context for Ed.D. Program Revision

Prior to revising its Ed.D. program, the University of Utah's Department of Educational Administration's offerings were quite conventional. The department offered a Master's program, an administrator certification program and two doctoral programs: a Ph.D. program and an Ed.D. program.

The Ed.D. program, while ostensibly providing advanced preparation for practicing administrators, differed little from the Ph.D. program, conforming closely to the arts and science model of graduate education. The vast majority of doctoral students in educational administration --most of whom intended to pursue careers as practitioners--opted for the Ph.D. program.

Several major forces influenced the redesign of the Ed.D. program. First, the department sought to draw a clearer distinction between the department's Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs, and, in particular, to design a doctoral program that more effectively served the needs of practicing administrators. Second, the

department's requirement that full-time doctoral students in residency work no more than half-time was particularly difficult for practicing administrators who wanted to stay on their career track or who had difficulty getting a full year leave of absence. Lastly, groups like the National Policy Board on Educational Administration and others had begun to establish a climate for reform in educational administration programs ---- with many of these reform efforts emphasizing the need for greater linkages between academic knowledge and reflective practice gleaned from the school setting.

In addition to these considerations, the department was conscious of some internal parameters for change. Foremost, the program had to be designed with the assumption that few, if any, additional resources could be allocated to the Ed.D. program. Thus, it was decided that the department's existing theory/research doctoral seminars would be included in the Ed.D. program. Further, based on the department's 10 year success with cohorts in the Masters program, Ed.D. students would be admitted and enrolled in cohorts to increase efficiency and predictability of course offerings.

Ed.D. Program Description

The program elements described below (structure, staffing, and student evaluation practices) were designed to enhance the linkages between theory and research traditionally emphasized at the university and reflective practice in the field.

Structural Elements

The Ed.D. program utilizes a field-based approach to the preparation of career administrators by incorporating the following structural elements. (See Figure I.) The preparation program is systematic and sequential in design. In particular, the program utilizes a cohort organization scheme in which core requirements in the areas of leadership, organizations, and ethics are scheduled the first academic year of the program, followed by elective specializations during the subsequent years of study. Elective options include courses in instructional management, legal issues, finance, politics and policy analysis, human resource administration, and some parallel courses with an emphasis on

administration in higher education institutions. The final year is devoted to the completion of an independent research project, the clinical research study, which is the Ed.D. counterpart to the traditional Ph.D. doctoral dissertation.

All content areas, including core requirements and specialization electives, include a theory/research seminar paired with a field-based application course. Students use their respective employment settings as a "field laboratory" to do applied projects and problem-solving. (Ph.D. students are eligible for enrollment in all theory/research seminars, but field-applications courses are limited to Ed.D. students only.) The field application course projects in the core areas of leadership and organizations are often analysis exercises assigned by the faculty. However, the field application projects in the specialization areas are typically left to the student's discretion (with faculty approval) and are intended to provide opportunities for students to address a problem of practice relevant to their own organizational or professional setting.

The research components of the doctoral program are scheduled during the summer sessions of the program, with the first summer devoted to Principles of Inquiry --- a conceptual approach to administrative decision-making and problem-solving. The second summer emphasizes methods and techniques of research, and the last summer involves the completion of the proposal for the culminating clinical research study.

The clinical research study is analogous to the traditional doctoral dissertation but with greater emphasis on a specific problem of practice. For instance, students may choose to evaluate an educational or administrative program that has been implemented in his or her employment setting. The clinical research study would be informed by previous theory and research and have defensible methods, but may have a more normative tone in its recommendations for practice. Further, it is not expected that a clinical research study have the degree of generalizability or the theory-building or theory-testing characteristics typically expected in a traditional doctoral dissertation. The department intends that student projects and clinical research studies may

benefit not only the students but also their employing educational institutions by addressing relevant and timely administrative problems.

Clinical Faculty

The Ed.D. program utilizes a different staffing configuration than does the Ph.D. program. Because the Ed.D. has such a strong emphasis on administrative problem-solving and application of theory and research to practice, the department employs practicing field administrators who hold a doctoral degree as part-time clinical faculty (.10 FTE). Most of these clinical faculty work as line administrators for local school district central offices, the State Office of Education, or higher education institutions. Originally, clinical faculty were assigned to work with Ed.D. students in a ratio of one faculty to two or three students across all field application coursework. However, revisions in staffing assignments were made based on earlier program evaluation findings. Now, one or two clinical faculty are assigned to each field application content area. This new staffing configuration makes instructional and advisement coordination efforts between clinical faculty and resident faculty less cumbersome; allows clinical faculty to concentrate on one particular content area most related to their professional experience and interests; and allows students an opportunity to work with an array of clinical faculty during their program of study.

The role of clinical faculty in the program might best be described as advisory to the academic faculty. Although resident faculty have full responsibility for their theory/research seminars, clinical faculty members work as equal team members with resident faculty included in the planning and teaching field applications courses. Clinical faculty are expected to advise students on the development of their field projects as well as to evaluate these field projects. Clinical faculty may also help students gain access to relevant information needed for their projects if they are unable to garner that sort of cooperation from their employing organization. Clinical faculty may also serve on students' doctoral committees, although on-campus faculty must constitute the majority of the supervising committee.

Student Evaluation

Admission requirements and standards for the Ed.D. program are the same as for the Ph.D. program (GRE scores, past academic record, letters of recommendation, personal statement) with one important exception. All Ed.D. applicants must be practicing administrators who have the full cooperation and support of their employer. This requirement is to ensure that all students have a "field laboratory" in which to do applied projects and to assure that their employers will work cooperatively with the student to meet the administrative problem-solving requirements of the program. Students are admitted in cohort groups on an alternate year basis (i.e. odd years only - 1995, 1997, 1999, etc.).

Another important difference in student evaluation is the departure from the traditional comprehensive qualifying exam used to promote students to doctoral candidacy. Instead, a portfolio review of Ed.D. student work is held annually. A traditional proposal defense and a final oral defense of the clinical research study are the culminating student evaluation components of the program.

Ed.D. Program Assessment and Results

To date, several assessment or evaluation studies have been conducted since the implementation of the Ed.D. program. Below, results of these studies are described as well as how some of these results have influenced final program revisions.

Administrative Decision-making Model

Galvin and Ogawa (1995) explained and discussed the use of Nisbett and Ross' (1980) normative model of human inference, or judgment, as a conceptual frame for administrative decision-making problems in the Ed.D. program. This model was chosen because: "decision making is central to administration, universities are particularly adept at imparting analytical skills, and the model of human inference...provides a natural bridge between administrative theory and practice" (Galvin & Ogawa, 1995).

They explained that the normative model of human inference identifies three common sources of inferential error: knowledge structures based on previous

experience, the availability heuristic, and the representativeness heuristic. Students are taught to use the model to examine their administrative judgments, to question their assumptions about administrative practice, and to apply formal theories in analyzing their field experiences.

Galvin and Ogawa (1995) report that the initial experience has been promising. They summarize, saying,

> "In the program's initial course, students....became adept at using the model to critically analyze their own judgments. Many students became quite enthusiastic about the insights that they gained to their own decisions and consequent actions...."

This model for administrative decision-making continues to be taught in the introductory Ed.D. course, Principles of Inquiry (EdAd 721).

Incentives to Attract Clinical Faculty

Pounder's study (1994) identified factors that attracted a large number of clinical faculty (52) to apply for the available positions (6). Survey data collected from these applicants revealed that important non-pecuniary incentives included the desire to influence the preparation of future educational leaders, the opportunity for change and stimulation (including the opportunity for professional development and intellectual stimulation), and the opportunity for professional recognition. In particular, applicants at a mature stage of their administrative careers were more inclined to be attracted to the change and stimulation offered by the position. Whereas, applicants at earlier administrative career stages were often attracted to the opportunity for professional recognition afforded by the appointment. Pecuniary incentives ($500 per quarter) were least important in attracting clinical faculty applicants but may serve as inducements to commitment and regular participation in the program.

The author's application of concepts from organizational economics suggested that administrators may have been attracted to the clinical professorship because the costs associated with accepting this position were low relative to the costs that would be incurred to meet those same needs through other professional opportunities.

Pounder also observed that the department's costs associated with offering these incentives is marginal--largely because many of these incentives are inherent to the organization itself. Further, the department may have created the clinical faculty position in order to mitigate the transaction cost associated with the development of a more applied, field-based preparation program. That is, because the faculty was reluctant to devote an inordinate amount of time to field supervision of applied projects (thus reducing available time for research activities), they may have created the clinical faculty position to reduce the "cost" of implementing a more field-based, practice-oriented program.

The department has continued to be successful in attracting and retaining its selected clinical faculty members. Their performance has greatly enhanced both the quality of field application projects as well as clinical research studies conducted by students.

Socialization of Clinical Faculty

Using data collected systematically during the first six months of the Ed.D. program, Hart & Naylor (1992) used organizational socialization theory to examine the impact of the new staffing configuration on new clinical faculty, existing academic faculty, and the department as a whole. They reached several important conclusions.

First, the department experienced a certain amount of pressure and influence due to the critical mass of newcomers to the department. Socialization of clinical faculty was inhibited by their limited contact with academic faculty.

Second, although the academic faculty viewed itself as strongly connected to the field, the referent "field" is defined in national and international terms. The clinical faculty, however, saw the department as relatively isolated from the field of local school districts and the state and, thus, saw the Ed.D. program and their participation in it as the department's attempt to reduce its isolation.

Third, the majority of academic faculty viewed refereed and nationally recognized publications as indicators of high quality, rigorous, and valued

scholarship. The clinical faculty saw refereed publications as sources of external revenue and personal aggrandizement of limited value to the immediate educational environment.

Fourth, clinical faculty and students shared a high expectation that the department should accommodate the time schedule and calendars of local school districts in scheduling classes, faculty meetings and the like. Both groups acknowledged that they typically do not resolve time conflicts in favor of their university work and that time conflicts are a recurring issue for them.

Based on Hart and Naylor's (1992) study results, the original configuration of clinical faculty staffing was revised such that only one or two clinical faculty are assigned to work with any given academic faculty member in his or her particular content area. As a result, the induction and socialization costs encountered during the early stages of the program have been significantly reduced. Also, clinical faculty have become more aligned with one particular content area in which they have significant practitioner experience. That is, clinical faculty are assigned to courses based on the similarity between their role responsibilities or administrative experience and the course emphasis. The initial costs of coordinating five or six clinical faculty for each course have been noticeably reduced and clinical faculty can now focus their efforts on one content area rather than having to develop knowledge across all program content areas. As academic and clinical faculty have worked together over several years, their working dynamics have become easier to maintain and coordinate.

Value and Ethical Issues

Newell and Sperry (1992) examined the Ed.D. program in terms of the value dilemmas and ethical issues encountered at the junction between thought and practice. Several they noted are described below.

First, the admissions policy requiring that students hold administrative positions presented several potential dilemmas. Might it restrict the student pool at a time when greater student diversity is desired? Further, because students' employers must verify their support and cooperation for successful admission, how would the department make an admission decision when the

department is enthusiastic about an applicant, but the employer is not---or vice-versa? Also, how will the department view an applicant who holds a non-traditional position such as a management position in an educational software company?

To date, the Ed.D. program has admitted a representative balance of males and female students (approximately 50% each) as well as of minority students (approximately 10%). Further, the quality of Ed.D. students (as measured by GRE scores) is comparable to that of admitted Ph.D. students. To address the practitioner considerations in admissions, one clinical faculty member is assigned to serve on the admissions committee during Ed.D. admissions decisions. Several students with "non-traditional" administrative and organizational affiliations have been admitted to the program. It is sometimes a challenge for faculty to meet the varied needs of these students, but their program performance has been successful. As planned initially, the department now admits Ed.D. students on an alternate basis only (spring of odd years), thus maintaining the number and quality of students desired in the program.

Second, although the final year of the Ed.D. program fulfills the letter of the Graduate School's residency requirement, the program may fail to adhere to the spirit of the requirement, the purpose of which is to immerse graduate students in the culture of the university. Newell and Sperry acknowledge that the purpose of the Ed.D. program is to link academic knowledge to practice, but not to substitute one for the other. They asked, how will the department establish both an ethic and a practice of immersing students simultaneously in the practice and scholarship of educational administration? Also, how will students find time to do justice to a demanding doctoral program while still holding a full-time administrative post?

This continues to be an important issue for faculty and students. Because the time demands on students were so intense in the initial three-year program plan, the Ed.D. program has been modified to a four-year plan. Thus, students' courseload for each term of study has been reduced and the pace of the program is more reasonable. Also, previous theory courses and corresponding field

application courses were offered concurrently, allowing students little time to develop and complete the field projects. Now, the theory course if taken the term prior to enrollment in the corresponding field application course. Thus, students have time to develop the theory/research knowledge before crafting a field project.

The final issue regarding residency is still a dilemma. During the final year of study students are to complete their clinical research study. Although they are enrolled in a continuing seminar which requires them to be at the university several times per term, there is still a sense of disconnectedness with many students. It is easy for students to become immersed in their administrative duties and let the university work slide. Only four of the seven students enrolled in the first cohort of Ed.D. students completed their degree on schedule. Although it is appears that most of the Ed.D. students will complete their degree, some may have a delayed completion date due to the priority given to their administrative jobs.

Theory-Practice Connection

Pounder (1995) evaluated the effectiveness theory-practice emphasis in the Ed.D. program by assessing the degree and ways in which doctoral student field-based projecs and studies have resulted in program or policy changes in schools or other education-related agencies. Study data indicate that approximately half to two-thirds of student projects resulted in some sort of policy or program change in educational practice. Projects that resulted in change in local schools, districts, or other education-related agencies tended to be either policy adoptions addressing legal and/or personnel administration concerns or instructional program implementations for students and staff. Factors that enhanced the liklihood of a project resulting in a policy or program change were: 1) the student's familiarity with relevant problems of practice; 2) the degree to which students worked closely with other organizational employees in developing and refining the project, and 3) the utility and conceptual/analytical quality of the proposal itself.

Closing Comments

Perhaps the best way to summarize the status of the University of Utah's Field-based Ed.D. program is to record the remarks of Ed Bridges', the discussant at the 1992 AERA symposium on the Ed.D. program. Professor Bridges' comments were made from two perspectives: his California perspective, things he liked about the program, and his Missouri perspective, things that made him skeptical about the program.

Professor Bridges liked the conceptual orientation and rationale for the program, and found it most unusual for a department to actually have a conceptual orientation and use it. He was pleased with the inclusion of a values and ethics dimension. He also supported the department's endeavors to systematically evaluate the program to promote knowledge about administrator preparation, and he appreciated the candor with which faculty reported their observations. He also supported the use of local practitioners as clinical faculty as well as the overall effort to respond to the needs of the field in the immediate geographical region. Lastly, he appreciated the faculty's stated commitment to high quality teaching in all departmental degree programs.

On the more skeptical side, Professor Bridges noted that the Ed.D. program relies on academic faculty whose primary responsibility and work relates to research and publication. Further, several of these faculty are non-tenured Assistant Professors whose positions are not secure in a research institution without significant scholarly publication. Second, the program relies on clinical faculty who occupy demanding full-time administrative positions in other educational organizations. Third, all Ed.D. students work as full-time educational administrators and thus have significant responsibilities outside of their doctoral work. In sum, all major actors in the program have priorities or requirements that necessarily take a higher priority in their life than the Ed.D. program.

As disconcerting as this observation is, Bridges recommended that the way to deal with this dilemma is first to openly acknowledge it and the limitations it will place on the program and its major actors. Second, he recommended that the department should set realistic expectations for the endeavor or Bridges

admonished, "you will be destined for disappointment". Bridges' comments and the continuing observations of faculty serve as resources for the future evolution of the Ed.D. program in educational administration at the University of Utah. The tension between theory and practice and between the academic department and the field of practice both constrain and energize the effort. Maintaining the theory-practice balance in administrator preparation is not an easy task, but one that the University of Utah's Department of Educational Administration is proud to have addressed with reasonable success.

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